

### **UC asks state for bigger budget to avoid fee hikes**

University of California seeks a far bigger budget this year, hoping to avoid a nearly 10% increase in student costs. Some say the request is futile, given the state's grim economic outlook. By Larry Gordon- LA Times

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Reporting from San Francisco — University of California regents took a symbolic step Thursday in an effort to avoid or reduce the 9.4% increase in undergraduate student fees that university officials have said they anticipate next year.

The UC system's budget request to the state Legislature for the 2009-2010 school year originally projected a \$662 fee increase, which would have hiked in-state undergraduate fees to an average of \$8,670, including some campus charges but not including room and board. The original budget proposal also suggested that some graduate and professional school fees would increase by larger amounts.

But under a change approved Thursday, the regents will now ask Sacramento for extra funds, estimated at \$142 million, to avoid fee increases, a tactical switch that many experts think will be futile amid the state's mounting deficits. UC already was seeking a 17% increase for next year above the \$3 billion in state general-fund revenue it received this year.

Lt. Gov. John Garamendi, an ex-officio UC regent, advocated the change, saying the university should put the pressure of a fee decision on the Legislature first. "It is a very, very important tactical issue," said Garamendi, who is running for governor. Otherwise, he said UC would be giving up the fight against fee increases before the debate begins in Sacramento.

A few other regents said they thought the new tactic could antagonize lawmakers, who are dealing with possible deep cutbacks in other areas of education and social services. And some regents said any delay on the fee issue would be unfair to students and their families who need to financially plan for next year.

After some debate, the regents approved the wording change for the budget and asked for funds to avoid the higher fees. The regents are expected to vote on a possible hike no later than March, when new students are deciding what colleges to attend.

UC President Mark G. Yudof said Thursday that the "odds are overwhelming that we will have an increase in fees," but that he was uncertain of the amount because of the state's budget uncertainties.

In another matter, seven labor union officials were arrested at the UC regents meeting at a UC San Francisco facility Thursday for refusing to end their loud chanting, demanding that UC give substantial pay increases to its service workers. The seven were cited with trespassing and failure to disperse and were expected to be released, UC police said. The union's 8,500 members, including custodians and food service workers, are deadlocked with UC in talks for a new contract.

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